2014

Washington Scholars Program

A Washington Opportunity Pathway

Policies & Guidelines

Recognizing . . .

the academic achievement, leadership ability, and community service of 147 high school seniors, three from each legislative district, and 49 alternate recipients.

WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL
EDUCATION · OPPORTUNITY · RESULTS

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What is the program's purpose?

High schools in Washington graduate a significant number of students each year who distinguish themselves through outstanding academic achievement. The Washington Scholars program establishes a consistent and uniform method to:

- Recognize and honor the accomplishments of outstanding graduating high school seniors.

- Encourage and facilitate privately funded scholarship awards by non-state organizations.

- Stimulate recruitment of outstanding students to Washington public and independent colleges and universities.

- Allow educational leaders, the Legislature, and the governor to reaffirm the importance of educational excellence to the future of the state.

What do Washington Scholars receive?

The Washington Scholars recognition award represents the highest academic honor conferred by the State of Washington. Washington Scholar designation is a valuable asset in securing other educational scholarships, and some colleges and universities may offer other financial or special incentives to attract the Scholar. The Washington Scholars finalists and alternates receive:

- An honorary recognition award certificate signed by the Governor, Secretary of State, and the chair of the Washington Student Achievement Council.

- A congratulatory letter from the governor.

- Statewide recognition through:

  o Announcement of award recipients to admissions and scholarship officers at in-state public and private colleges and universities, members of the Legislature, and the governor.

  o Publication of the annual "Washington Scholars Directory."

  o A statewide media press release.

  o Declaration of "Washington Scholars Month" by gubernatorial proclamation in the spring.

Who may be nominated?

To be eligible for nomination as a Washington Scholar, the student must be:

- Graduating from an in-state high school during the current academic year (public, private, or home-schooled).
- A qualifying "resident student." See "Eligibility Criteria for Resident Tuition Status" and "State Laws and Rules" at http://www.wsac.wa.gov/ProgramAdministration/Residency.

The Legislature established the Washington Scholars program to recognize academic excellence and outstanding accomplishment. Nomination criteria include:

- Cumulative grade point average (based on six semesters or nine trimesters $9^{th} - 11^{th}$ grade, using a maximum 4.00 unweighted grade scale)
- Highest combined SAT Math and Critical Reading scores from a single test date, or the ACT Composite score. The Writing section scores are not applicable.
- Leadership activities
- Community service activities
- Honors and awards
- Miscellaneous school and other activities

The Washington Scholars program does not set minimum grade point average (GPA) or test scores, which might inhibit full participation by all high schools. The academic scores of all nominees will be high. The final selection process requires a careful review of the other information provided in the application.

The Council will pre-calculate the candidate's academic score based on submitted documentation, using the following formula:

$$((GPA \times 800) + (SAT\ CR + SAT\ M))\ divided\ by\ 64$$

The maximum calculated academic score will not exceed 75 points.

ACT Composite scores are converted to the equivalent combined SAT CR/SAT M score using the conversion chart that is available from both the College Board and ACT websites.

If presented with both the SAT and ACT scores for a candidate, the Council will use the highest converted test value to calculate the academic score.

How many students may be nominated?

Each principal of an accredited public or private Washington high school is encouraged to nominate 1 percent of the graduating senior class based on the October 1 enrollment count of the previous

year. Use the following table to determine the number of candidates a school may nominate:

Senior class enrollment (October 1)	Total Nominations (1 percent)
149 and below	1
150 to 249	2
250 to 349	3
350 to 449	4
(Calculations continue on the same basis)	

The Council will seek additional student nominations for a legislative district in which fewer than four nominations are received.

How do I nominate student(s) for the award?

Nominate candidates for Washington Scholars recognition using the Council's on-line, secure web site. Once nominated, the candidate(s) will receive an email that contains the secure web link to the Washington Scholars application. For award consideration, nominated candidates must submit a complete application by the deadline.

Important to note:

(1) Submit candidate nominations early, at least **two weeks before the application deadline**, to give the candidate sufficient time to develop and transmit a quality application.
(2) Candidate applications must arrive at the Council no later than **11:59 p.m., January 21, 2014.**
(3) **Late applications will not be considered.**

Step-by-step nomination instructions begin on page 8 of this document.

How are Washington Scholars selected?

A selection committee reviews and scores all nominations. The committee is comprised of approximately 36 representatives from public and private high schools and colleges, state agencies, and education associations.

The Washington Scholars program receives between 550 – 700 applications annually, representing students residing in all 49 legislative districts statewide. Applications are grouped by the candidate's residence legislative district, and candidates within each legislative district are evaluated as a distinct unit. That is, candidates residing in a legislative district compete against other candidates residing in the same legislative district.

The review process uses only the application form, the $9^{th} – 11^{th}$ grade transcript, the senior year first quarter grade (or fall mid-semester progress) report, and SAT/ACT test score document(s). Other materials are discarded prior to review (examples of discards include photos, resumes, recommendation letters, award certificates, newspaper articles, folders and report covers).

Maximum points possible in each element:	
Academic (test scores and GPA)	75 pts. max.
Leadership	10 pts. max.
Community service	5 pts. max.
Honors and awards	5 pts. max.
Overall excellence	5 pts. max.
Maximum score	**100 pts.**

Candidates within the legislative district are rank-ordered by final score. Those candidates identified with the three highest scores receive Washington Scholars recognition, and the fourth ranked candidate receives Washington Scholars-Alternate recognition, in each legislative district.

The Council notifies all nominating principals and individual applicants of their final status.

How is the Washington Scholars program publicized?

The Washington Student Achievement Council notifies in-state public and private high school principals that nominations are open for the Washington Scholars award, beginning in late autumn. The Council distributes nomination instructions, program policies and guidelines, and candidate application materials at that time.

A statewide media press release announces the new award recipients and alternates in the spring. The Council mails individual notices to inform applicants, the in-state public and independent colleges and universities, legislators, the governor, and participating high schools of the final results. The Council also posts the names of current year recipients to its agency website in a "Directory of Washington Scholars and Washington Scholars-Alternates." A gubernatorial proclamation designates the month of June as "Washington Scholars Month" in honor of the new Scholars.

The Council assumes no responsibility for local recognition. School administrators are encouraged to coordinate local recognition efforts for their Washington Scholars.

Does the personal information provided remain confidential?

The purpose of the program is to bring state and local recognition to the achievements of these students and encourage privately funded scholarships in support of Washington Scholars. To ensure that students are not exploited, the program expressly prohibits the sharing of information for commercial or non-scholarship purposes.

How has the Washington Scholars program changed over the years?

The 1981 Legislature originally created the Washington Scholars as a recognition-only program. The state recognized its first cohort of Washington Scholars in 1982.

Subsequent legislative changes to the program have included:

- **Benefit at in-state public colleges and universities**.

  - 1984 – A two-year tuition waiver benefit authorized for new and pre-existing Washington Scholars who attended an in-state public college or university.
  - 1987 – The tuition waiver benefit expanded to 12 academic quarters (or eight semesters).
  - 1995 – The tuition waiver benefit at public institutions changed to a state grant for new Scholars:
    - Maximum grant values capped at full-time, resident undergraduate public college tuition, but pro-ratable.
    - State grant contingent upon funding, and authorization by the Legislature.

- **Benefit at in-state private colleges and universities**.

  - 1988 – A state grant benefit authorized for Washington Scholars at in-state private four-year colleges and universities. These grants are contingent upon:
    - A match of institutional gift aid funds by the institution; and
    - Authorization and funding by the Legislature.

- **Benefit Activation and Enrollment Requirements**.

  - 1984 – Benefit activation required within three years after high school graduation.
  - 2000 – With the addition of Alternates in 2000, benefit activation required by fall term immediately after high school graduation (unless deferment authorized).
  - 2000 – Added requirement to remain continuously enrolled for one academic year.
    - Those who did not activate the award in a timely manner (who did not qualify for deferment), or did not remain continuously enrolled for one year, forfeit the benefit to the Alternate in the same legislative district.

- **Minimum GPA and Probationary Status**.

  - 1984 – Maintain a cumulative 3.50 GPA to receive benefits after the first year.
  - 1987 – Cumulative GPA requirement reduced to 3.30.
  - 1987 – Probationary status added to allow second-year Scholars to receive the benefit while working to increase the GPA.

- **Identification of legislative district**.

  - 1982 – Legislative district identified using the high school location.
  - 1995 – Legislative district identified using the Scholar's residence address.

- **Number Awarded and Award Values**. Changes to the number of new Scholars awarded and/or reductions to the value of the monetary benefit have been enacted during lean economic budget periods.

  o 2006 and 2010 – Legislative reductions to the number of Scholars named to the award, per legislative district, occurred in 2006 (two per district) and 2010 (one per district).
  o 2009-10 through present – Grant values for pre-existing, active Scholars who still have unused capacity for the state grant prorated to 90% of public tuition. Grants also prorated for brief periods in the early 1990's and 2000's.
  o 2011 – Due to state budget cuts, no new monetary benefits have been authorized for Scholars from the graduating classes of 2011 and thereafter.

- **Current configuration – 2013-2015 biennium**.

  o Three Scholars and an Alternate recognized for their accomplishments each year in each of the state's 49 legislative districts.
  o No new monetary benefits awarded due to state budget cuts.

Step-by-Step Electronic Nomination Instructions

Please read these instructions carefully before accessing the Council's secure website to begin the on-line nomination procedure. Principals may wish to delegate the data entry of student nomination information to an appropriate staff member.

The on-line nomination screens are structured to be fairly self-explanatory and intuitive, however, these instructions provide step-by-step detail that will allow the user to prepare for upcoming information requirements and navigate the site more easily.

1. **Identify suitable candidates** using the Council's selection criteria.

   - High schools may print a PDF version of the application from the nomination summary screen for use as a candidate pre-screen tool.

2. Secure the candidate's agreement to participate. **Do not nominate candidates who may decline to complete the application.**

3. Gather required materials **before** entering the Council's secure web site:

   - **Student's full name**
   - **Student's social security number (SSN)**, or 9-digit Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) alien ID number (if a qualifying non-citizen state resident).

- o This must match the identifier used to apply for other student aid via the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

- **Student's physical residence address** - PO Box addresses are not sufficient to identify the legislative district.
- **Student's mailing address, if different** (optional).
- **Student's email address**

  - o High schools may print a hard copy application for candidate(s) who do not have an email address or who are without internet access.

- **Electronic files** of the following documents (each one is a separate attachment):

  - o **9th – 11th grade cumulative high school transcript**. The GPA entered **must** be based on a maximum 4.0 unweighted scale.
  - o **Senior year first quarter grade report** (or equivalent fall term mid-semester progress report – **not** first semester grades). Senior year grades are not calculated in the Academic Score.
  - o **SAT test score document**. Report the highest combined Critical Reading and Math scores for a single test date; do not "mix and match" scores from different test dates.
  - o **ACT Composite test score document**.

  (Read "**Helpful hints**" to learn what types of document file extensions are suitable for attachment.)

- **Rank in class** (optional)

4. **Access the Council's secure web site** and enter the assigned **activation code** (see the Council's announcement letter for this information).

5. **Enter** your individual **logon ID and password**. If accessing the secure website for the first time, **create a logon ID** (this is your email address), **password, and security question**.

- Keep the logon ID, password and security question confidential for later use.
- Do not enter the secure portal using another individual's logon ID (email address) and password. **This is identity theft. Each user must create an individual logon ID and password.**
- **IMPORTANT**: For security reasons, on-screen inactivity of ten or more minutes may automatically shut down the secure website, requiring the user to log back in. All attachments plus unsaved data that have not cleared the final submission button are lost and must be re-entered/**reattached**.

6. **Review and edit** the "**Verify school information**" screen to verify accurate information. The screen initially pre-fills with the school information currently on file with the Council. Click **"This information is correct" to save** and open the nomination summary screen.

- **Important**: Ensure that the 12th grade enrollment count is accurate. That field calculates the number of nominations the school may submit.

7. Within the **"Nominate a Candidate"** screen, click **"Add nomination"** (either button) and begin entering candidate information. **Attach electronic documentation** where requested.

   - **NOTE**: If the candidate does not have email or internet access, you may click the appropriate check box on the "Add nomination" screen to print a hard copy paper application for the candidate's use. (see ** below for additional instructions)

8. Click "**Submit Nomination**." This will:

   - Create the electronic signature, certifying that the principal has authorized the nomination and that the information is true and correct.
   - Generate an email (* see note below) to the candidate with instructions to locate the on-line application.
   - Save the entered data and attachments, or generate an error message. **Unresolved errors prevent submission** of the nomination to the Council **and block release of the email to the candidate**. Successfully submitted nominations are reversible by Council staff only.
   - Return the user to the nomination summary screen.

9. Click "**Add nomination**" again to enter another nomination. The declining number of available nominations will display in **Box 1**. A display of "0" means the maximum number of nominations already has been submitted for the school.

   Box 2 at the bottom of the nomination summary screen will immediately display the names of successfully submitted candidates. **NOTE**: If Box 2 is empty, no nomination is on file at the Council.

10. If finished, click "**Logout**" at the top of the screen to exit. If you have any unsaved or incomplete screen work, the information will be lost upon exit.

    You may re-enter the site at any time using the logon ID and password. Contact Council staff during normal business hours if you have difficulty with the portal login or password.

* All nominated candidates must complete and submit an application by the deadline for award consideration. An applicant program summary contains detailed instructions for completing the application, which is available at http://readysetgrad.org/educators/set/washington-scholars.

** Nomination of candidates who will submit hard copy paper applications:

- An **electronic candidate nomination record** must exist on the Council's secure on-line website. The Council will discard hard copy candidate applications submitted without a corresponding electronic nomination record in the secure portal.

- The Council's secure website will produce an error message, and will not save the nomination, if required documents are not attached to the on-line record. Required electronic attachments include the student 9th – 11th grade transcript, senior year grade/progress report, and test score results.

- Hard copy paper applications must have original "wet" signatures by the principal, or the authorized school representative, and the candidate. If the student is under age 18, the parent or guardian also must sign the hard copy application.

Helpful hints – All nominations:

- The Council converts all documents into digital images for review by the selection committee and for records storage. To ensure that digital images will be legible and readable by the selection committee, remember to:

    o Attach only documents with valid file extensions. Examples of acceptable and unacceptable file types (extensions) are shown below:

Acceptable file extensions:	Unrecognized/Unacceptable file extensions:
.doc (MS Word)	.do
.docx (MS Word)	.htm
.jpeg (photo file)	.html
.jpg (photo file)	.webarchive
.pdf (Adobe Acrobat)	(blank) – i.e., no file extension shown
.png	or "unknown" file extension
.rtf	
.tif (photo file)	
.txt (text file)	

    Documents with unrecognized or unacceptable file extensions may attach to the nomination screen, however, those files will not convert to usable digital files that will open for viewing. Selection committee members will be unable to review the document, and the Council cannot place the document into digital records storage. If discovered before the committee meets, Council staff will ask that you provide a replacement document.

    o Avoid attaching electronic documents that:

    ✓ Originally were printed or photocopied on colored paper stock or using colored toner. These documents do not scan legibly and may be difficult for the selection committee to read due to the lack of contrast between the text and the background.

✓ Include highlighter pen markings. Highlighter often scans as black or dark gray, obliterating the information in the scanned digital document.

- **High school transcript, and senior year progress report**: Submit separate, non-duplicative documents. The senior grades are not a component of the "Academic Achievement" score, which derives from the 9th – 11th grade cumulative GPA. Senior year grades are considered within the "Overall Excellence" category.

- **Test scores:**

  o **SAT test results**: Do not report "mix and match" Math (quantitative) and Critical Reading scores from different SAT test dates. Documentation of SAT test scores must report the **highest combined Math and Critical Reading scores** resulting from any **ONE** test date. The Writing test score is not used to calculate the academic score.

  o **ACT test results**: Report the ACT Composite score. The Writing test score is not used to calculate the academic score.

  o **Candidates with SAT and ACT test results**: You may attach documentation for both exam types if the student has tested in both. The candidate will receive the benefit of the highest converted result in the Academic Score calculation. The Writing score from either test is not used.

  Attach separate, unduplicated electronic documents of score pages for each exam type: SAT scores only in one file, and ACT test scores only in another file. If you do not have separate documents, please have the student print a hard copy of their test score results from the SAT and ACT website(s); then scan and attach to the electronic nomination page.

Helpful hints – Hard copy application submission:

DO:

- Print hard copy applications using **black ink toner on white paper stock** to ensure legibility. (See "Helpful hints - All nominations" earlier in this section.)

- Have the candidate complete hard copy paper applications in **black or dark blue ink pen**. **Pencil is not acceptable**.

- Ensure that the candidate completes the hard copy paper application(s) **legibly**. The candidate is likely to receive fewer points if committee members cannot read the entries.

- **Photocopy and retain a copy** of the completed, signed application before mailing.

AVOID:

- **Duplex printing**: Single-sided pages are preferred to ensure no page skips during electronic file creation, and that all confidential information is detached, before selection committee use. The confidential pages include the "Optional" section and the signatures page.

- **Folders and report covers**. Council staff will discard any folders and report covers prior to committee review.

- **3-hole punched** application materials. Hole punches may delete critical words.

- **Non-required materials.** Council staff will discard non-essential materials before committee review. Examples of discarded materials: resumes, photos, recommendation letters, news articles, copies of award certificates, and so on.

- **Multiple staples.** Use only one staple for each candidate packet. The Council uniformly reorders the materials for digital scanning and committee review. Removing multiple staples tears pages and increases processing time.

OTHER:

- To be considered complete, the application packet must include:

  o The fully completed and **signed** application form
  o A copy of the high school grade transcript (**9th through 11th grade**)
  o A separate photocopy of the senior year first quarter grade report, or fall mid-semester progress report (circa October/November, not January)
  o A print-out or photocopy of the student's SAT/ACT test score document(s)

The Council must receive all applications, including attachments, by **11:59 p.m., January 21, 2014.** To ensure delivery tracking, use **Express Mail, Federal Express, United Parcel Service, or USPS certified mail with a return receipt. Late or incomplete application packages are not considered.** The Council is not responsible for applications that do not arrive or that arrive late.

Mail the complete packet to:

Washington Scholars Program
Washington Student Achievement Council
917 Lakeridge Way, Olympia, WA 98502   **(use street address for UPS or FedEx delivery)**
P.O. Box 43430, Olympia, WA 98504-3430   **(use PO Box for U.S. Postal Service delivery)**

If you have questions, contact Council staff at:

Phone: 360.753.7843 or 360.753.7850
Fax: 360.704.6243 or 360.753.7808   (original hard copy mailing **must** follow the fax)
E-mail: wascholars@wsac.wa.gov